

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project
Adaptive Management Oversight Committee
Standard Operating Procedures
(SOP 0.0: Overview)

April 30, 2005

The Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project (hereafter Project) formally began on January 28, 1998, when Mexican wolves were brought to the Blue Range (near Alpine, Arizona) from pens on Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge (in New Mexico). The planning processes that led to that event began nearly 20 years earlier, and they continue today.

From 1998 through 2002, the Project operated under direct supervision by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, acting largely through the Mexican Wolf Recovery Coordinator. That approach evolved from 2002 through 2004 into a more collaborative adaptive management effort among several agencies, with State and Tribal leadership for the Project and participation by many other agencies and organizations and the public. An interagency Adaptive Management Oversight Committee (hereafter AMOC) now manages the Project, which is carried out on the ground by an Interagency Field Team (hereafter IFT). Public participation in the Project is ensured through an Adaptive Management Work Group (hereafter AMWG), which includes AMOC agencies and other state and county government agencies. AMWG meets quarterly in public sessions in the Project area, to provide a forum for open discussion of issues of concern and to gather public input that helps the agencies guide the Project.

The nature of wolf management is such that consistency and reliability in approving and carrying out actions are of paramount importance. If the “right things” are not done the “right way,” each and every time, experience shows that all kinds of problems can and most likely will happen. The high potential for controversy reflects the emotional significance that is attached to wolf reintroduction and recovery – the human dimension.

The margin for error in managing wolves is small, thus it is crucial to establish what the “right way” to do things is, and when and how departures from the “right way” should be allowed. The purpose of the Project’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) is to delineate the “right way” to do the “right things,” regardless of which IFT or AMOC members are involved. The SOPs listed in the Table of Contents include those that have been identified since 1998 as vitally important to ensuring consistent and reliable Project operations. They provide greater certainty for the agencies and the public as to how decisions will be made, and implemented. They also allow for flexibility where circumstances are expected to require it (managing wolves is more complicated than baking a cake!). However, the SOPs also set sidebars on flexibility, by identifying how to approve significant departures (exceptions) from the procedures outlined. Over time, new SOPs will likely be added, and the existing ones will be revised, as necessary to address any significant issues that emerge.